



IMPACT OF LEARNING MUSIC ON CHILDREN'S ABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

Music has become increasingly popular with the younger generations. Recent research has proven that learning music is beneficial to young children, improving their cognitive, physical, mental, and social abilities. However, despite these benefits, schools have not aligned their curricula to include established music lessons or programs in order to support and enhance the mainstream learning process. The following study explores the benefits of learning music for young children and why introducing a developed music program into the school curriculum would be advantageous to them. The data for this study was collected through interviews with early childhood music teachers and parents, along with observations and inferences from the articles published by other authors. The resulting data showed that music is in fact beneficial for young children in particular. Their cognitive abilities, such as memory, problem-solving skills, concentration, and literacy skills, as well as their physical abilities, such as motor skills, control, and coordination, are improved. Recent research also found that singing helps children expand their vocabulary and can expose them to new languages and cultures. In addition, music provides them with a medium to express themselves while forming connections with the people and their surroundings. Hence one can rightfully conclude that learning music as a part of the school curriculum is the most significant means of benefiting young children and helping them develop and grow by enhancing their cognitive, physical, mental, and social skills.

KEYWORDS: Learning Music, Benefits, School, Children.

INTRODUCTION

In one way or another, music is often considered ubiquitous. In nature, in ordinary life, in even the most arbitrary sounds, there is an element of music and rhythm. The human mind has evolved to synchronize with these musical sounds and their flow, connecting body and mind. Music drives people's actions and influences their emotions. It also has the effect of calming their soul and helps them to express themselves, hence they learn musical instruments. This includes not only adults but also children. Even without proper musical training, children are learning music from the minute they are born. Children learn nursery rhyme songs, how to clap their hands to different rhythms, and if they are given the chance, play several instruments. But why exactly is this salient? Why should children be learning music?

Over the past few years, several studies have been conducted on how learning music benefits children, explaining the multiple advantages they gain from it. Despite this, countless schools still consider it an optional subject. This study explains the benefits of musical education for children aged 1 to 12. Learning music in the school curriculum is the most significant way of benefiting children and helping them develop and grow by enhancing their cognitive, physical, mental, and social skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Musical education for children is becoming increasingly popular for the reasons that it provides cognitive, physical, mental, and social benefits. While this topic has been widely studied, research has mainly been focused on informing the benefits rather than explaining the next steps that should come from this resulting data. This study explores how – because of the benefits that learning music provides – schools should have more advanced music education programs in their curriculum.

As explained in the previous paragraph, many articles and studies have focused on explaining the benefits of children learning music. Jones (n.d.), Francis (2023), Brown (2012), and “The Benefits of Children Learning Music” (2022) all explain the several benefits using much evidence and data from other studies. However, these articles and studies do not provide a stance on the topic and what this data means for musical education. While Tanguay (2018) explains that music can be used as therapy, that is not the most effective use considering the various benefits musical education can provide for children.

Brown (2012) touches on the topic of having advanced musical education programs in school curricula and how that proves beneficial. Similarly, Martin (2020) uses her evidence to explain the importance of music education in schools. Across these several articles and studies, there is consistent and reliable evidence that supports the fact that there should be more advanced music education programs in school curricula.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of proper studies and research conducted on why school curricula should include established music education programs. Thus, this paper will explore the numerous reasons why learning music in the school curriculum is the most significant way of benefiting children and helping them

grow and develop by using several reliable articles, studies, and experienced interviewees.

MATERIALS & METHODS

A hybrid research methodology was carried out for the purpose of this study, i.e., a mix of primary and secondary research was conducted.

Secondary Research: A web search was carried out to obtain base data for this study. Various Articles and studies reviewed are namely by Austin Jones (n.d.), Carla Tanguay (2018), Shanthwani Francis (2023), Laura Lewis Brown (2012), and an article titled *The Benefits of Children Learning Music* (2022).

Primary Research: Additionally, there were 3 interviews conducted for this study. The interviews are considered a good choice for this topic as the interviewees would be experienced in this field and be able to provide relevant and important data. The first was with a violin teacher, Ms. Criselda Peres. The second was with a piano teacher, Ms. Irene Chia. The third interview was with an anonymous parent of 2 children who learn music outside of school.

RESULTS

The data collected from the interviews led to several conclusions. When asked whether playing the instrument gets easier as they (the student) progress, the interviewees responded that it does, although several skills have to be developed and improved. Following up on this question, when asked about physical skills, interviewees listed coordination, control of muscles, activating fine motor skills, body control, and multitasking. Regarding mental skills, interviewees explained that music helps students express themselves, and focus better, and that “continuous practice helps in strengthening neural pathways”.

DISCUSSION

Learning music has become quite popular for kids nowadays. However, rather than practicing it as a trend, it needs to be embedded into the learning process to reap its extensive benefits. Several studies performed on this subject have shown that it is beneficial for children. The results of the present study also led to the understanding that learning music or musical instruments can enhance various abilities in children of developing ages. A 2010 study by the National Academy of Science states that “babies find music more engaging than speech, and are born with the ability and desire to move rhythmically to music” (Tanguay, 2018).

Learning music in schools at early stages is important because of the cognitive benefits it provides. Recent research showed children who participate in music learning have better language pronunciation, verbal memory, logical reasoning, and complex problem-solving skills (Francis, 2023). The same article explained that children who learn music seem to have improved concentration and literacy skills. It was found that music - when singing songs - helps with expanding children's vocabulary and can expose them to other languages (Martin, 2020). In an interview with a violin teacher for young kids, she explained that “continuous practice helps in strengthening neural pathways so that the act of playing (an instrument) becomes easier as you move forward” (R. Suhani, personal interview, 2023). Learning music also helps in building spatial intelligence,

allowing children to visualize and solve things easily, which can come into play in architecture, engineering, math, art, gaming, and technology (Brown, 2012). Therefore, we can see that learning music in school at early stages will not only improve cognitive abilities but also assist children in developing essential life skills.

Furthermore, learning music in school during childhood is also worthwhile as it provides numerous **physical benefits**. Tanguay (2018) explains that the physical benefits for children learning music include better motor skills and control, motor planning, locomotor skills, bilateral body movements, etc. Music teachers find that in younger students, music helps them gain control of their big muscles and activate their fine motor skills, along with making them more aware of how their body moves. They also explained that “learning an instrument is essentially multitasking” and helps improve coordination (R. Suhani, personal interview, 2023). Thus, we can see that learning music in schools during childhood will be physically beneficial and promote development in other areas of learning - writing, artwork, sports, etc.

Finally, learning music in schools at young ages is valuable because of the mental and social benefits it provides. Children will have reduced levels of stress, and increased self-esteem by performing in concerts. Social skills can also be increased when working as a group, leading to better communication and collaboration skills. When playing music in a group, children are able to work on teamwork and experience having shared goals with others. Alan Harvey, a neuroscientist and musician, explained that “levels of the hormone oxytocin (in the bloodstream) are raised when people are singing together. Oxytocin is associated with empathy, trust, and relationship building. Our sensitivity to pain and the stress hormone cortisol decreases when we are involved in group music-making activity” (Jones, n.d.). Dr. Alexandra Lamont, lecturer in the psychology of music at the University of Keele, also found that “children who take part in music develop higher levels of social cohesion and understanding of themselves and others”. Amanda Martin (2020), an elementary school music teacher, says music helps “students develop an understanding of other cultures, which leads to a beautiful acceptance of others. Students realize that recognizing differences is good, and it creates greater respect for others”. Hence, learning music in schools at young ages is valuable as it benefits children both mentally and socially.

Some may argue learning music in schools is a waste as children would not use it in the future and that it could distract them from academics. However, learning music in schools will improve children's abilities, several of which they will need as they develop and grow. The parent interviewee with 2 children explains that she thinks music has been a way for her children to destress and express themselves, which they will take with them well up to adulthood and beyond. Also, learning a few instruments opens up the world of music to them enabling them to explore new and varied skills. A study in 2007 by Christopher Johnson showed that students in elementary schools with advanced music education programs scored 22% higher in English and 20% higher in math compared to schools with low-quality music programs (Brown, 2012). In addition, Professor Gordon Shaw from the University of California explained that “when children learn rhythm, they are learning ratios, fractions, and proportions” (The Benefits Of Children Learning Music, 2022). Moreover, learning music can be challenging at times, and taking children through this experience lets them build resilience and discipline. They learn a valuable lesson which is that practice and hard work is required to reach goals.

For these reasons, musical learning should be more extensively taught in schools as a valuable and integral part of the school curriculum.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that learning music can provide immense benefits to young children and support their overall growth and development. Interviews with parents and teachers reaffirmed this perspective and provided a more specific outlook. Introducing music as a part of the school curriculum is the most significant way of benefiting children as it assists them in enhancing their cognitive, physical, mental, and social skills, along with supporting the mainstream syllabus. Further research into this topic could be expanded into how learning music can benefit children with special needs and motivate them.

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